

With many necessary reforms, then, I maintain that examinations may be used as a practical and sufficient substitute for the pernicious system of marking. I am for the entire abolition of marks in the interests both of teacher and taught. Surely as the science of education advances, as knowledge is made easier and more attractive, and (shall I add?) as a system of registration ensures the intellectual and spiritual qualifications of teachers, the necessity for these artificial incentives will disappear. And may we not claim to have made already sufficient progress in most of these directions to justify us in now casting aside "marks" as a cumbrous and obsolete part of our scholastic machinery?

DISAPPOINTED MOTHERS.

BY ALICE POWELL.

There are many half-acknowledged facts in the world; and because their existence is more implied than asserted, it is not to be inferred that those facts do not exist.

That the majority of parents, particularly mothers, are more or less disappointed in their children, who grow up differently (not necessarily badly) from what they expected, is a fact, and one to be regretted.

Setting aside vicious qualities, and supposing ordinary virtues and amiability in mother and child, what is the cause of this widespread lack of sympathy between the two? On physical grounds it seems natural that there should be more of the mother than of the father in the child; and as the mother has, in ninety cases out of a hundred, the entire management of the children, is it not strange that she is commonly the first to lose touch with them?

One cause of this feeling of disappointment—unexpressed often, it is true—is that parents (and here again it is more usually the mother's weakness) have an inordinate longing to see their children like themselves. Nothing seems to delight them more than to be told how much John or Mary resembles them. Is not this desire, that their children should be copies of themselves, both conceited and narrow-minded? The world would become more prosaic than it is were each successive generation to be but a reproduction of the one that went before it.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new," and parents who cannot move with the times must be contented to be left behind, and should not make themselves unhappy because their children have interests apart from theirs.

As mothers have the future of their children in their own hands, they must, in some measure, be answerable for the disaffection which distresses them later. Much of this is due to

mismanagemment during the early years of their children's lives; and much also to an insufficient realisation of the important fact that each possesses a distinctive character entirely his own, not necessarily resembling either or both of his parents.

Taking the world as a whole, do not most children eventually prefer their father to their mother?

Of course the pattern child "likes papa and mamma equally;" but we have not to deal with pattern children, and we find that the instinctive bias, during the first years, is decidedly towards the mother, while later affection frequently veers round to the father. Or rather, love for the father, being somewhat an after-growth, is consequently more a matter of choice, and reflection plays an important part in the workings of the heart.

To retain through advancing youth the love of her children, which is intuitive in infancy, the mother must study to deserve the affection she solicits by something more than maternal tenderness. She becomes, in fact, a candidate for friendship, to be attracted by her winning and lovely qualities, and she must beware of any cause her child may find to judge her disadvantageously. Children's judgment of character is acknowledged to be correct. They see us as we are, and, being unable to make allowances for circumstances, their opinion is eminently more truthful than merciful.

There is one point a child entirely misses, and that is the difference between the physical strength of father and mother, the one who requires the most possessing the least. For instance, a mother sits up night after night with an ailing child. Want of rest, loss of appetite, deprivation of fresh air and exercise, added to her days of anxiety, result in a state of nervous irritation, the outcome of which is that she becomes, quite unintentionally, but nevertheless very really, cross. The child does not comprehend the facts of the case, but naturally thinks "mother is not half so nice and kind as father," who comes in for half an hour's play with the little invalid after a night's sound sleep and a hearty breakfast. This is unfair; but it is not the child's fault, neither is it the mother's; and in this case truth and justice do not go hand in hand.

Again, women are apt to be more inconsistent than are men, and to be inconsistent in the treatment of children is fatal. Who does not remember being allowed to play with some

valuable book, ornament, or what-not—and then, a leaf was torn, a vase broken, and punishment followed, its severity being not in proportion to the naughtiness of the child, which was possibly nil, but to the value set upon the article spoiled.

Nothing more galls and annoys a child than to perceive that their "Yes" or "No" depends upon his parents' moods. He accustoms himself to this as to other harmful circumstances; learns to watch his opportunity, and gets leave to do to-morrow that which has been forbidden to-day. But he ceases to love his mother exactly in proportion as he learns to manage her. To retain a child's affection it is necessary before all things to be consistent, and if mothers set themselves a few simple rules by which to be guided in the saying of "yes" or "no," the evil of indiscriminate concessions and refusals would be averted.

Another fault that we find more commonly in women, and one that utterly mars the motherly character, is jealousy. During the first years of his life a child naturally looks to his mother for everything. It is to her he first holds out his arms, for her that the first flowers are gathered; a hundred and one such little actions show plainly that she is the centre of his small world. But as he grows older his circle widens, fresh objects attract his attention, his sympathies become enlarged, and she is no longer indispensable to his happiness. This is the first trial to a jealous temperament, and if, instead of rejoicing in the little one's freshly-found pleasures, and encouraging his newly-placed affections, the mother grudges to share what has hitherto been all her own, she defeats her own ends. Her child quickly learns to understand the captiousness which is born of jealousy, and, to avoid its disagreeable consequences, becomes deceitful.

To retain the simplicity of a child's love it is a mistake to evince too great a desire for the exhibition of it, for this is contrary to the nature of most children; and much show of affection does not necessarily imply great depth. Deep waters run still, and yet how many mothers prefer the pretty, gushing caress to the unselfish action which is, sometimes, the only language of a deeper nature.

The mother may deserve the first place in the affection of her children. She has spent weary nights and days in nurturing the infant life, and though the motherly instinct is strong, it requires more than mere motherly instinct to make her ready

at all times to give up much that makes life pleasant and comfortable; it needs continual self-suppression on her part, too, to enter fully into the little joys and sorrows of her children, no matter what else may occupy her mind.

Little of this falls to the father's share, and yet he is far more able, from the very fact of being less *en evidence*, to gain and retain the affection of his children in after years. But the unselfish, unjealous mother will bear this, and in time the men and women she has brought into the world will appreciate her according to her deserts, and she will be to the end their most cherished and valued friend.

Respect is, after all, the true foundation of filial love, and where that is wanting there can be no real affection. Many mothers fail to gain the "honour" which is their due, because they let little things disturb their equanimity; the mind thus constantly upset loses balance, and it becomes impossible to preserve that tranquillity of disposition which is necessary in dealing with the young. The most justifiable indignation is only anger to a little child; therefore calmness in word and action should be cultivated as a habit, and is essential where reproof or punishment is needed.

There is great directness in children's reasoning, and they seldom object to what is just. Therefore the child whose naughtiness is passed over does not esteem its mother more, but less, than he does the nurse who corrects him as he deserves.

The smaller faults of vacillation, weakness, ill-temper, and inconsistency will be condemned by children as much as greater faults; and the mother who fails to eradicate these from her character will, alas! never gain their respect, and, therefore, their love, be she ever so disinterested and unselfish.

Disappointment is the inevitable result of great expectations, for the attained always falls short of the unattainable. The mother who weaves the golden web of her child's future as she watches him in his cot too often lives to find the threads of that web are by no means golden, but only the flimsiest gossamer; and this rude awakening from pleasant dreams, sad though it be, is too usual to be surprising.

Surely the reason that the majority of mothers are so sorely dissatisfied with the work of their own hands is because that work has been undertaken without duly gauging its difficulties; the task set before them has been improperly prepared, and the

lesson has had to be imparted to another before it has been thoroughly assimilated by the teacher. What result but failure can be expected?

"The child is father of the man." It is only the very few who are able to undo a bad beginning and train themselves afresh. How great then is the responsibility of mothers in whose hands is placed the training of the early years! And yet there are mothers who treat the infant as a living doll, the little child as a mere toy, the growing boy as an animated machine.

And for the mother who diligently performs the duties of her calling, pointing out the paths of righteousness rather than those of pleasantness, and taking care herself to walk therein, will she not forget the travail of her soul and the labour of her hands when "her children shall arise and call her blessed"?